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➤EDITORIAL NOTES.◀

❏**Dr. Stebbins', Interpretation of the Balaam Narrative.**—Our readers will be interested in the attempt of Dr. Stebbins to interpret the narrative of Balaam from a naturalistic standpoint. He has undoubtedly succeeded in presenting, most vividly, the times and surroundings of the story. After a study of this article one will be better prepared to form an opinion concerning the narrative; for the first and most important step in all interpretation is to acquaint one's self with the historical setting of the passage to be studied. The question arises, however, whether Dr. Stebbins has not gone too far. His estimate of Balaam's character may be correct, his portrayal of the relations existing between Israel and Moab may be historically accurate; but is there not one element which he has entirely failed to consider in his treatment of the subject? Does he not seem to have left entirely out of the account the fact, for it is a fact, and, indeed, an indisputable one, that in everything pertaining to Israel's career, there was manifested a special divine interposition? It is well, we believe, to emphasize the human element in Scripture; this element has been, and is, lost sight of by too many interpreters. And in just so far as it is lost sight of, there is a failure to grasp the true force and meaning of the Sacred narrative. But while giving due consideration to this element, we must not forget the other, the divine element. Not to appreciate this is attended with many serious consequences.

Dr. Stebbins is known, the world over, for his able defense of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. His ability as a critic and as an interpreter is conceded by all. His views, therefore, upon the subject under consideration, while as a whole they are not likely to be accepted by many who hold to a strict theory of inspiration, are nevertheless entitled to a respectful and thoughtful consideration.

Rev. Dr. Cheyne and the "Hittites."—We print with pleasure the following letter, received just too late for the April number. The warning which it contains is one to which we may well give heed. In his recent book, *Assyriology: Its Use and Abuse in Old Testament Study*, Prof. Francis Brown considers, none too strongly, the same danger. He says: "First results are provisional. Early translations are approximate only. Some detail, at first unperceived or misunderstood, may change the scope of a whole inscription. And, more than this, to see the newly discovered facts in their right relations—to perceive their meaning when combined with other facts, and to work them all together into one compact, enduring structure, is not a matter for the first day, or first week." What is true of Assyriology, is pre-eminently true of "Hittology."

TENDRING RECTORY, COLCHESTER, March 21, 1885.
To the Editor of THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT.

Pray allow me to correct an inadvertence of your contributor "J. A. S." on p. 159 of the OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT, Dec., 1884. He apparently supposes that I regard the Old Testament references to the Hittites as all unhistorical, whereas it is only *certain references* which I have, in the article "Hittites" in the

Encyclopædia Britannica, described as to all appearances not historically accurate. Is the Old Testament everywhere contemporary with the events?

Pardon me for also correcting a reference to *The Empire of the Hittites* at p. 228, Jan. 1885. My friend, Prof. Sayce, is far too unaggressive, far too conscientious, to have indulged in such arrogant and offensive language towards me as that which Mr. Wright has fallen into in your extract. My article *Hittites* is trustworthy up to its date, and not diametrically opposed to Mr. Wright's views on the subject of the Hittites, though speculations on the reading of the Hittite inscriptions were not as yet in existence. On the subject of Old Testament criticism, my ideas differ, no doubt, from those of Mr. Wright, but have at least a right to be respectfully treated. This is not the first unprovoked aggression Mr. Wright has made upon me. I beg, sir, that you will not identify yourself with his reactionary principles. Scholars ought by this time to have learned mutual respect.

Yours truly,

T. K. CHEYNE, D. D.

P. S.—It seems at present more likely that Mr. Wright will have to recall some of *his* hypotheses than that I shall have to change *my* view of the "Hittites" of Genesis. May I reiterate a warning (see OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT, 1884, p. 76) against accepting too hastily the apologetico-historical conclusions of writers of the school of Mr. Wright? It is too common to suppose that the bearings of archæological discovery are *altogether* favorable to the minute accuracy of every one of the numerous historical passages in the Old Testament. This is surely not the case. Recent cuneiform and recent Egyptian discoveries alike have results as curious as they are interesting, and which only inveterate conservatives can regard as favorable to the old traditionalism.

The Fulfillment of Prediction.—Little is made of the prophetic element in Scripture by many, because for so large a portion of it definite fulfillment cannot be satisfactorily asserted. On the other hand by those who make much of the prophetic element, even the smallest details of a given prophecy are found to have been fulfilled. Here are two classes of Bible-interpreters. The one class examine a prophecy, find no clear fulfillment of it in history, regard the whole subject as vague and unsatisfactory, and consequently drop it, preferring to give attention to those portions of Scripture which may be studied, as it would seem, to greater profit. The other class examine the same prophecy, find (or fancy that they find) the most remarkable fulfillment even to minute details, regard the prophetic portions as, in fact, the most important in the Bible, and drop all else. The great majority of Bible students belong to one or the other of these classes. Where is the mistake?

The examination in both cases is an examination of the surface. They look merely at the outside. The first class make up their minds, from a superficial study, that certain things must have taken place in order to satisfy the words of the prediction. They cannot discover that exactly *these* things have happened. Then uneasiness follows, and interest in the subject is lost. The second class scour through history, find, here and there, events which answer the conditions, and regard *these* as a fulfillment of the prediction; or, in much the same fashion, they interpret those applications made in the New Testament, as fulfilling, for the first time and the last, the passages in the Old Testament to which they correspond. Both of these classes may be termed *literalists*. They are both wrong. They both do great damage to the cause they would serve, the former by their seeming lack of faith, the latter by their actual lack of common sense.

Bible-students must learn to recognize the fact, that, however far-seeing, the prophetic fore-sight was comparative blindness; that, however clear, the inspired